

T H E
Distinguishing Marks
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W O R K
O F T H E
S P I R I T of G O D.

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The T H I R D E D I T I O N.

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T H E

Distinguishing Marks, &c.

1 J O H N iv. 1.

Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

1. **T**HE apostolical age was an age of the greatest out-pouring of the Spirit of God that ever was. And that both as to the extraordinary gifts of the spirit, and also as to his ordinary operations, in convincing, converting, enlightening and sanctifying the souls of men. But as the influences of the true spirit abounded, so counterfeits did also then abound: the devil mimicking, both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God. This made it necessary that the church of Christ should be furnished with some certain rules and distinguishing marks, by which she might proceed safely in judging of spirits, and distinguishing the true from the false. The giving such rules is the design of this chapter, where we have this matter expressly treated of. The Apostle here, of set purpose undertakes to supply the church of God with such marks of the true spirit as may be plain and safe, and surely distinguishing, and well accommodated to use and practice. And that the subject might be clearly and sufficiently handled, he insists upon it throughout the chapter: which makes it wonderful that what is said in this chapter, is no more taken notice of at this time, when that which is so remarkable appears; such an uncommon operation on the minds of the people; and there is such a variety of opinions concerning it, and so much talk about the Work of the Spirit.

2. The Apostle is led to discourse on this subject by an occasional mention of the indwelling of the spirit, as the sure evidence of an interest in Christ, in the last verse of the foregoing chapter. "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which

which he hath given us." Whence we may infer, that his design in this chapter is, not only to give marks whereby to distinguish the true spirit from the false, in his extraordinary gifts of prophecy and miracles; but also in his ordinary influences on the minds of his people.

3. The words of the text are an introduction to this discourse, of the distinguishing signs of the true and false spirit. Before the Apostle proceeds to lay down these signs, he exhorts the christians he writes to, to care in this matter. And 1. Here is the duty of trying the spirits urged, with a caution annexed, against over credulousness: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." The necessity of this duty is shewn from this, that there were many counterfeits, "because many false prophets were gone out into the world." And these did not only pretend to have the Spirit of God in his extraordinary gifts, but also to be eminently holy persons: to have much of his ordinary influences on their hearts. We are therefore to look upon these words as a direction to try their pretences to the Spirit of God, in both these respects.

4. After the Apostle had thus warned christians, with respect to the trial of spirits, he immediately proceeds to give them rules, by which they may safely proceed in judging of every thing that has the pretext of being either the ordinary, or extraordinary work of the Spirit of God.

My design therefore is to shew what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a Work of the Spirit of God, by which we may proceed safely in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see in others.

5. And here I would observe, that we are to take the scriptures as our guide in this and in all cases. This is the standing Rule which God has given to his Church, to guide them in all things, relating to their souls. And doubtless that Spirit that indited the Scriptures knew how to give us good rules, by which to distinguish his operations, from all that is falsely pretended to be from him. And seeing he has done this, in the chapter wherein is the text; and done it more particularly and fully than any where else; in my present discourse I

shall go no where else for marks of the trial of the spirits, but shall confine myself to those that I find here.

But before I proceed particularly to speak to these things, I would prepare my way by first observing negatively, in some instances, what are *not* signs that we are to judge of a Work by, whether it be the work of the Spirit of God or no. And especially, what are no Evidences that a work that is wrought amongst a people, is not the work of the Spirit of God.

6. First, Nothing can certainly be concluded from this, That the work that appears is carried on in a way very unusual and extraordinary. It is no sign that a work is not the work of the Spirit of God, that is carried on in such a way as the same Spirit heretofore has not been wont to carry on his work; provided the variety or difference be such, as may still be comprehended within the limits of those rules which the Scriptures have given to distinguish a work of the Spirit of God by. What we have been used to, or what the church of God has been used to, is not a rule by which we are to judge, whether a work be the work of God, because there may be new and extraordinary works of God. God has heretofore wrought in an extraordinary manner; he has brought those things to pass that have been new things, strange works; and has wrought in such a manner as to surprize both men and angels: and as God has done thus in times past, so we have no reason to think but that he will do so still. The prophecies of scripture give us reason to think, that God has still new things to accomplish, things that have never yet been seen. No deviation from what has hitherto been usual, let it be never so great, is an argument that a work is not the work of the Spirit of God, if it be no deviation from the rule that God has given, to judge of a work of his Spirit by. The Spirit of God is sovereign in his operations; and we know that he uses a great variety; and we cannot tell how great a variety he made use, within the compass of the rules he himself has fixed. We ought not to limit God where he has not limited himself. If a work be never so different from what has formerly been, yet if it agrees in those things that the word of God has given us, as the distinguishing Signs of a Work of his Spirit, that is sufficient to determine us in its favour.

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7. Therefore it is not reasonable to determine that a work is not the work of God's spirit, because of the extraordinary degree in which the minds of persons are influenced. If they seem to have an extraordinary conviction of the dreadful nature of sin, and a very uncommon sense of the misery of it, or extraordinary views of the certainty and glory of divine things; and are proportionably moved with very extraordinary affections of fear and sorrow, desire, love or joy: or if the change that seems to be made in persons be very sudden, and the work carried on with very unusual swiftness, and the persons that are thus strangely affected are very many, and many of them are very young; and also be very unusual in many other circumstances, not infringing upon scripture marks of a work of the spirit; these things are no argument that the work is not a work of the Spirit of God.

The extraordinary degree of influence, if in its nature it be agreeable to the rules and marks given in scripture, is rather an argument in its favour; for by how much the higher degree that is in, which is in its nature agreeable to the rule, so much the more is there of conformity to the rule, and so much the more evident is that conformity.

8. There is a great aptness in persons to doubt of things that are strange; especially, it is difficult for elderly persons to think that to be right, which they have been never used to, and have not heard of in the days of their fathers. But if it be a good argument that a work is not from God, because it is very unusual, then it always was so, and was so in the Apostle's days. For the work of the Spirit of God that was wrought then, was carried on in a manner, that in very many respects was altogether new. There were such things then, as neither the Jews then living, nor their fathers, had ever seen or heard. Yea such as never had been since the world stood: the work was carried on with more visible and remarkable power than ever had been before; never were there seen before such mighty and wonderful effects of the Spirit of God, in such sudden changes, and such great engagedness and zeal in such multitudes; such a great and sudden alteration in towns, cities, and countries; such a swift progress, and vast extent of the work.

And we have reason from scripture prophecy to suppose, that at the commencement of the last and greatest out-pouring of the Spirit of God, the manner of the work will be very extraordinary, and such as never has yet been seen; so that there shall be occasion then to say, as in Isaiah lxvi. 8. "Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travelled, she brought forth her children." It may be reasonably expected that the extraordinary manner of the work then, will bear some proportion to the very extraordinary events, and that glorious change in the state of the world, God will be about to bring to pass by it.

9. Secondly, A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength. The influence the minds of persons are under, is not to be judged of one way or the other, whether it be from the Spirit of God or no, by such effects on the body; and the reason is, because the scripture no where gives us any such rule. We cannot conclude that persons are under the influence of the true spirit, because we see such effects upon their bodies, because this is not given as a mark of the true spirit: nor, on the other hand, have we any reason to conclude, from any such outward appearances, that persons are not under the influence of the Spirit of God, because there is no rule of scripture given us to judge of spirits by, that does either expressly or indirectly exclude such effects on the body; nor does reason exclude them. It is easily accounted for from the nature of divine and eternal things, and the nature of man, and the laws of the union between soul and body, how a true and proper sense of things, should have such effects on the body, even those that are of the most extraordinary kind; such as taking away the bodily strength, or throwing the body into great agonies, and extorting loud outcries. There are none of us but suppose, that the misery of hell is so dreadful, and eternity so vast, that if a person should have a clear apprehension of that misery as it is, it would be more than his feeble frame could bear; and especially, if at the same time he saw himself in great danger of it, and to be utterly uncertain

tain whether he should be delivered from it, yea, and to have no security from it one day or hour. We need not then wonder, that when persons have a very great sense of that which is so amazingly dreadful, and also a great view of their own wickedness and God's anger, things seem to them to forebode immediate destruction.

We see the nature of man to be such, that when he is in danger of some calamity that is very terrible to him, he is ready upon every occasion to think that now it is coming: as when persons hearts are full of fear, in time of war, they are ready to tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and to expect the enemy every minute, and to say within themselves, now I shall be slain. If we should suppose that a person saw himself hanging over a great pit, full of fierce and glowing flames, by a thread that he knew to be very weak, and not sufficient long to bear his weight, and knew that multitudes had been in such circumstances before, and that most of them had fallen and perished; and saw nothing within reach that he could take hold of to save him; what distress would he be in? How ready to think that now the thread was breaking; now this minute he should be swallowed up in these flames? And would not he be ready to cry out in such circumstances? How much more those that see themselves in this manner hanging over an infinitely more dreadful pit, or held over it in the hand of God, whom at the same time they see to be exceedingly provoked? No wonder they are ready to expect every moment when this angry God will let them drop; and no wonder they cry out of their misery; and no wonder that the wrath of God, when manifested but a little to the soul, over-bears human strength.

10. So it may easily be accounted for, how a true sense of the glorious excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his dying love, should be such as to overcome the bodily strength. We all own, that no man can see God and live; and that it is but a very small part of that apprehension of the glory and love of Christ, which the saints in heaven enjoy, that our present frame can bear: therefore it is not at all strange that God should sometimes give his saints such foretastes of heaven, as to diminish their bodily strength.

11. But some object against such extraordinary appearances, that we have no instances of them recorded
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in the New Testament. If this should be allowed, I see no force in the objection, since neither reason, nor any rule of scripture excludes such things. I do not know that we have any express mention in the New Testament of any person's weeping, or groaning, or sighing, through fear of hell, or a sense of God's anger; but is there any body so foolish as from hence to argue, that in whomsoever these things appear, their convictions are not from the Spirit of God? And the reason why we do not argue thus, is, because these are easily accounted for, from what we know of the nature of man, and from what the scriptures inform us in general, concerning the nature of eternal things, and the nature of the convictions of God's spirit; so that there is no need that any thing should be said in particular concerning these external, circumstantial effects. But though they are not particularly recorded, yet there is great reason to think, from the general accounts we have, that it could not be otherwise: and that That great out-pouring of the Spirit which then was, was not wholly without those extraordinary effects on person's bodies. The Jaylor, in particular, seems to have been an instance of that nature, when he, in the utmost distress and amazement, came trembling, and fell down before *Paul and Silas*: his falling down at that time does not appear a designed putting himself into a posture of supplication; for he seems not to have said any thing to them then; but he first brought them out, and then he says to them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts vi. 29, 30. The Psalmist gives account of himself crying out aloud; and of a great weakening of his body, under convictions, and a sense of the guilt of sin, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4. "When I kept silence my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer."

12. We read of the disciples, Matt. xiv. 26. that when they saw Christ coming to them in the storm, and took him for some terrible enemy, they cried out for fear: Why therefore should it be thought strange, that persons should cry out for fear, when God appears to them as their terrible enemy, and they see themselves in danger of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulph of eternal misery!

13. It is a weak objection, that the impressions Enthusiasts are under, have been wont to have a great effect on their bodies. That the Quakers used to tremble, is no argument that *Paul*, and the Jaylor did not tremble from real convictions of conscience. Indeed all such objections from effects on the body, let them be greater or less, seem to be exceeding frivolous; they that argue from hence, are going in the dark. They know not what ground they go upon, nor what rule they go by. The root and cause of things is to be looked at, and the nature of the operations and affections that person's minds are under, are what are to be enquired into, and examined by the rule of God's word, and not the motions of the blood and animal spirits.

14. Thirdly, It is no argument that an operation on the minds of a people, is not the work of the Spirit of God, that it occasions a great ado, and a great deal of noise about religion. For though true religion does not delight in the applause of men, yet such is human nature, that it is morally impossible there should be a great and general concern, and engagedness of mind amongst a people, and yet but little said or done, that should be publicly observable; or that it should not cause a visible and open commotion and alteration amongst that people.

Surely, it is no argument that the minds of persons are not under the influence of God's Spirit, that they are very much moved. For eternal things are so great, and of such vast concern, that there is great absurdity in men's being but moderately moved by them. And when was there ever any such thing since the world stood, as a people in general being greatly affected in any affair whatsoever, without noise or stir? The nature of man will not allow it.

15. Indeed Christ says, Luke xvii. 20. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation:" that is, not with outward and visible pomp. And yet it shall not be set up in the world, on the ruins of Satan's kingdom, without a mighty change in the state of things; to the observation and astonishment of the whole world. This is declared in the prophecies of scripture, and by Christ himself, in this very place, in his own explanation of those very words, ver. 24. "For as the light-
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ning that lighteth out of one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of Man be in his day." This is to distinguish Christ's coming to set up his kingdom, from the coming of false christs, which he tells us will be in a private manner in the deserts, and in the secret chambers, whereas this event should be open and public, in the sight of the whole world, like lightning that cannot be hid, but glares in every one's eyes, and shines from one side of heaven to the other.

Accordingly we find, that when Christ's kingdom came, by that remarkable pouring out of the Spirit in the Apostle's days, it occasioned a great stir and ado every where. What a mighty opposition was there in Jerusalem, on occasion of that great effusion of the Spirit there? And so what great ado in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and other places; the affair filled the world with noise, and gave occasion to some to say of the Apostles, that "they had turned the world upside down." Acts xvii. 6.

16. Fourthly, It is no argument that an operation on the minds of a people, is not the work of the Spirit of God, that many who are the subjects of it, have great impressions on their imaginations. That persons have many impressions on their imaginations, does not prove that they have nothing else. It is easy to be accounted for, that there should be much of this nature amongst a people, where a great multitude of all kinds of constitutions, have their minds engaged, with intense thought and strong affection, about those things that are invisible. Yea, it would be strange if there should not. We cannot think of things invisible, without a degree of imagination. I dare appeal to any man, whether he is able to fix his thoughts on Christ, or the things of another world, without imaginary ideas attending his meditations? And the more engaged the mind is, the more lively and strong will the imaginary idea ordinarily be; especially when the contemplation is attended with any thing of surprize. As when the view a person has is new, and takes strong hold of the passions, either fear or joy; and when the change is sudden, from a contrary extreme, as from that which was extremely dreadful, to that which is extremely delightful. And it is no wonder that many persons do not
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well distinguish between that which is imaginary, and that which is intellectual and spiritual: and that they are apt to lay too much weight on the imaginary part, and are most ready to speak of that in the account they give of their experiences, especially persons of less understanding.

17. As God has given us such a faculty as the imagination, and has so made us, that we cannot think of things spiritual and invisible, without some exercise of this faculty, so it appears to me that this is really helpful to the other faculties of the mind, when a proper use is made of it, though often, when the imagination is strong, and the other faculties weak, it over-bears them. And it appears to me manifest in many instances, that God hath made use of this faculty to truly divine purposes; especially in some that are more ignorant: he seems to condescend to their circumstances, and deals with them as babes; as of old he instructed his church while in a state of ignorance and minority, by types and outward representations. I can see nothing unreasonable in such a supposition. Let others that have much occasion to deal with souls in spiritual concerns, judge whether experience do not confirm it.

18. Fifthly, It is no sign that a work wrought on the minds of people is not from the Spirit of God, that example is made use of as a great means of it. It is surely no argument that an effect is not from God, that means are made use of in producing it; and it is no more an argument, that this means is made use of, than if it was any other means. It is agreeable to scripture that persons should be influenced by one another's good example: the scripture directs us to set good examples to that end, Matt. v. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 1. 1 Tim. iv. 12. Tit. ii. 7. and also directs us to be influenced by the good examples that others set, and to follow them, 2 Cor. viii. 1—7. Heb. vi. 12. Phil. iii. 17. 1 Cor. iv. 16. and chap. xi. 1. 2 Thess. iii. 9. 1 Thess. i. 7. By which it appears, that example is one of God's means; and certainly it is no argument, that a work is not the work of God, that God's own means are made use of to effect it.

18. And as this is a scriptural way of carrying on God's work, so it is a reasonable way. It is no argument that men are not influenced by reason, that they

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are influenced by example. This way of persons holding forth truth to one another, has a tendency to enlighten the mind, and to convince reason. None will deny, but that for persons to signify things one to another by words, may rationally tend to enlighten their minds. But the same thing may be signified by actions, and that more fully and effectually. Words are of no use but as they convey our ideas to others; and this, actions, in some cases, may do more fully. There is a language in actions; and in some cases, much more clear and convincing than in words.

It is therefore, no argument against the goodness of the effect, that one affects and stirs up another; or that persons are greatly affected by seeing others so; yea, though the impression that is made upon them should be only by seeing the tokens of extraordinary affection in others, without hearing them say one word. There may be a language sufficient in their behaviour only, to convey their minds to others, and to signify to them the sense of things they have, more than can possibly be done by words. If a person should see another under some extreme bodily torment, he might receive much more convincing evidence what he suffered, by his actions in his misery, than he could do by the words of a relator. In like manner, he might receive a greater idea of any thing that is delightful, from the behaviour of one that is in actual enjoyment, than by the narration of another. I desire this matter may be examined by the strictest reason.

20. There never was yet a great revival of religion, but that example had a main hand in it. So it was in the time of the Reformation, and so it evidently was in that great out-pouring of the Spirit that was in the Apostle's days, in Jerusalem, and Samaria, and Ephesus, and other parts of the world; as will be most manifest to any one that attends to the accounts we have in the Acts of the Apostles: as in those days one person was moved by another, so one city or town was influenced by the example of another, 1 Thess. i. 7, 8. "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achia, for, from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad."

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And it is foretold, that the Work of God should be carried on very much by this means, in the last great out-pouring of the Spirit, that should introduce the glorious day of the Church, so often spoken of in Scripture, Zach. viii. 21, 22, 23. "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also. Yea many people, and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, in those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

21. Sixthly, It is no sign that a work that is wrought amongst a people is not from the Spirit of God, "That many that seem to be the subjects of it, are guilty of great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct." It is no wonder at all, that in a mixt multitude of all sorts, wise and unwise, young and old, who are under strong impressions of mind, there are many that behave themselves imprudently. There are but few that know how to conduct them under vehement affections of any kind; to do so requires a great deal of discretion, and strength, and steadiness of mind. A thousand imprudences will not prove a work, not to be the work of the Spirit of God; yea, if there be not only imprudences, but many things prevailing that are irregular, and really contrary to the rule of God's holy Word. That it should be thus may be well accounted for, from the exceeding weakness of human nature, together with the remaining darkness and corruption of those that are yet the subjects of the saving influences of God's Spirit.

We have a remarkable instance in the New Testament, of a people that partook largely of that great effusion of the Spirit, among whom there nevertheless abounded imprudences and irregularities; and that is the Corinthians. There is scarce any church more celebrated in the New Testament for being blessed with large measures of the Spirit of God; yet what manifold imprudences, yea, sinful irregularities, and strange confusion, did they run into, at the Lord's Supper, in

other parts of public worship, in contention about their Teachers, and even in the exercise of their extraordinary gifts, though they spake and acted by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God.

22. Nay, if we see great imprudences, and even sinful irregularities in some, that are employed as great instruments to carry on the work, it will not prove it not to be the work of God. The Apostle *Peter* himself, one of the chief instruments of setting up the Christian Church in the world, when he was actually engaged in this work, was guilty of a great and sinful error in his conduct; of which the Apostle *Paul* speaks, Gal. ii. 11, 12, 13. "But when *Peter* was come to *Antioch*, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from *James*, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision: and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that *Barnabas* also was carried away with their dissimulation." Now if the great pillar of the christian church was guilty of such an irregularity, is it any wonder if other lesser instruments should be guilty of many irregularities?

23. And here in particular, it is no evidence that a work is not the work of God, if many that are the subjects of it, or instruments to carry it on, are guilty of too great a forwardness to censure others as unconverted, either not duly apprehending the latitude the Spirit of God uses in the methods of his operations, or for want of making due allowance for that infirmity and corruption that may be left in the hearts of true believers.

It is observable that there never was a time of great reformation, a spirit of ZEAL in the church of God, but that it has been attended with irregularity, running out some way or other into an undue SEVERITY. Thus in the Apostle's days, a great deal of zeal was spent about unclean meats, both parties condemning one another, while St. *Paul* had charity for both: "He that eats, (says he,) to the Lord he eats, and giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." So in the church of *Corinth*, they had got into the way of extolling some ministers,

ministers, and censuring others, and were puffed up for one against another: but yet these things were no sign that the work then carried on was not the work of God. After this, when religion was still flourishing in the world, and a spirit of eminent holiness prevailed, the zeal of christians ran out into a very improper severity, in the exercise of church discipline towards delinquents. And in that glorious revival of religion, in the time of the Reformation, zeal in many instances appeared in a very improper severity, and even a degree of persecution. Yea, in some of the most eminent reformers; as in the great Calvin in particular: and many were guilty of severely censuring others that differed from them in opinion.

24. Seventhly, nor are "many errors in judgment, "and some delusions of Satan intermixed with the "work," any argument that the work, in general, is not the work of the Spirit of God. If many delusions of Satan appear at the same time that a great religious concern prevails, it is not an argument that the work in general is not the work of God, any more than it was an argument in Egypt, that there were no true miracles wrought there, by the hand of God, because *Jannes* and *Jambres* wrought false miracles at the same time by the hand of the devil. Yea, the same persons may be the subjects of much of the influences of the Spirit of God, and yet in some things be led away by the delusion of the devil. And this is no more a paradox, than many other things that are true of real believers, in the present state, where grace dwells with so much corruption remaining for a while together in the same heart. Many good men have undoubtedly, in this and other ages, exposed themselves to grievous delusions, by an aptness to lay too much weight on impulses and impressions, as if they were immediate revelations from God, to signify something future, or to direct them where to go, and what to do.

25. Eighthly, if some "fall away into gross errors, "or scandalous practices," it is no argument that the work in general is not the work of the Spirit of God. That there are some counterfeits is no argument that nothing is true; such things are always expected in a time of reformation. If we look into church history, we shall find no instance of a great revival of religion,

but what has been attended with many such things: instances of this nature in the Apostle's days were innumerable, both of those that fell away into gross heresies, and also vile practices. And they were not only private christians, but teachers, and officers, and eminent persons in the christian church; and some of whom God had endowed with miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

An instance of this nature was *Nicolas*, one of the seven deacons, who was looked upon by the Christians in *Jerusalem*, as a man full of the Holy Ghost, and was chosen out of the multitude of Christians to that office, for that reason, *Acts vi. 3. 5.* yet he afterwards fell away, and became the head of a sect of vile heretics, of gross practices, called from his name, the sect of *Nicolaitans*. *Rev. ii. 6,* and *15.*

So in the time of the Reformation from Popery, how great was the number of those that for a while seemed to join with the Reformers, that fell away into the grossest and most absurd errors and abominable practices?

And it is particularly observable, that in times of great pouring out of the Spirit to revive religion in the world, a number of those that for a while seemed to partake of it, have fallen off into whimsical and extravagant errors, boasting of high degrees of spirituality, and condemning others as carnal. Thus it was with the Gnostics in the Apostle's time; and thus it was with several sects of Anabaptists in the time of the Reformation. And some of the leaders of those wild enthusiasts, had been for a while, highly esteemed by the first Reformers.

And so in the beginning of *New-England*, when vital piety flourished, such things as these broke out. Therefore the devil's sowing such tares is no proof that a true work of the Spirit of God is not carried on.

26. Ninthly, It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, "That it is promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness." If there be really a hell of dreadful and never-ending torments, which multitudes are in danger of, and which the greater part of men in Christian countries do actually, from generation to generation,
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fall into, for want of a sense of the terribleness of it, and their danger, and so neglecting to take due care to avoid it; why then is it not proper for those that have the care of souls should take great pains to make men sensible of it? Why should not they be told as much of the truth as can be? If I am in danger of going to hell, I should be glad to know as much as possible I can of the dreadfulnes of it: If I am very prone to neglect due care to avoid it, he does me the best kindness, that does most to represent to me the truth of the case, that sets forth my misery and danger in the liveliest manner.

I appeal to every one here, whether this is not the very course they would take in case any great temporary calamity? If any of you that are heads of families saw one of your children in an house that was all on fire, that seemed insensible of its danger, and neglected to escape, after you had often called to it, would you go on to speak in a cold and indifferent manner? Would not you cry aloud, and represent the danger it was in, and the folly in delaying, in the most lively manner you was capable of? If you should continue to speak to it only in a cold manner, as you are wont to do in ordinary conversation about indifferent matters, would not those about you begin to think you were bereft of reason yourself? It is not the way of mankind, in temporal affairs of great moment, that require earnest heed and great haste, to speak to others of their danger, and warn them but a little; and when they do it at all, in a cold indifferent manner: nature teaches men otherwise. If then we that have the care of souls, knew what hell was, had seen the state of the damned, or by any other means, became sensible how dreadful their case was; and at the same time knew that the greater part of men went thither, and saw our hearers in imminent danger; and yet insensible of their danger, it would be morally impossible for us to avoid most earnestly setting before them the dreadfulnes of that misery they were in danger of, and warning them to fly from it.

27. When ministers preach of hell, and warn sinners to avoid it, in a cold manner, though they may say in words that it is infinitely terrible; yet (if we look on language as a communication of our minds to others)

they contradict themselves; for actions, as I observed before, have a language as well as words. And at the same time that such a preacher's words represent the sinner's state, as infinitely dreadful, if his behaviour and manner of speaking contradict it, he deserts his own purpose; for the language of his actions, is much more effectual than the bare signification of his words.

Not that I think the law only should be preached: ministers may preach other things too little. The gospel is to be preached as well as the law, and the law is to be preached to make way for the gospel. So that a minister ought not to insist so much on the terrors of the law, as to forget his end, and neglect to preach the gospel. But yet the law is very much to be insisted on, and the preaching of the gospel is like to be in vain without it.

Indeed some talk of it as an unreasonable thing to think to fright persons to heaven. But I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavour to fright persons away from hell, that stand upon the brink of it, and are just ready to fall into it, and are senseless of their danger. It is a reasonable thing to fright a person out of an house on fire. The word *fright* is commonly used for sudden, causeless fear, or groundless surprize; but surely a just fear, that there is good reason for, though it be very great, is not to be spoken against under any such name.

28. Having thus shown, in some instances, what are not evidences that a work wrought among a people, is not a work of the Spirit of God,

I proceed in the second place, to shew positively what are the sure, distinguishing, scripture evidences and marks of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see among a people, without danger of being misled.

And in this, as I said before, I shall confine myself wholly to those marks which are given by the Apostle in this chapter, where this matter is particularly handled, and more plainly and fully than any where else in the Bible. And in speaking to these marks, I shall take them in the order which I find them in the chapter.

1. First, when the spirit that is at work amongst a people

people is observed to raise their esteem of that Jesus that was born of the Virgin, and was crucified without the gates at *Jerusalem*; and to confirm their minds in the truth of what the gospel declares, of his being the Son of God, and the Saviour of men; it is a sure sign that that spirit is of God. This sign the Apostle gives us in the 2d and 3d verses. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God." This implies a confessing not only that there was such a person who did and suffered those things that are recorded of him, but that That person was Christ, i. e. the Son of God, the Anointed of God to be Lord and Saviour. That thus much is implied, is confirmed by the 15th verse, where the Apostle is still on the same subject of signs of the true spirit: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

And it is to be observed that the word *confess*, as it is often used in the New Testament, signifies more than merely allowing: it implies an establishing a thing by testimony, and declaring it with esteem and affection; so Matt. x. 32, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven." Rom. xvi. 9, "I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." And Phil. ii. 11, "That every tongue may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." And that this is the force of the expression here, is confirmed by that other place in the same epistle, in the next chapter, at the 1st verse, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." And by that parallel place of St. *Paul*, where we have the same rule given to distinguish the true spirit from all counterfeits, 1 Cor. xii. 3, "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed," (or will shew an ill or mean esteem of him) "and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

So that if the spirit which is at work among a people, is plainly observed to work after that manner, as to convince them of Christ, and lead them to Christ; to
confirm

confirm their minds in the belief that he is the Son of God, and was sent of God to save sinners, and that he is the only Saviour, and that they stand in great need of him; and to beget in them higher thoughts of him than they used to have, and to incline their affections more to him; it is a sure sign that it is the true and right spirit.

29. But the words of the Apostle are remarkable; the person the spirit gives testimony to, and to whom he raises their esteem, must be that Jesus that appeared in the flesh, and not another Christ in his stead; nor any mystical, fantastical Christ within, which diminishes their esteem of, and dependance upon an outward Christ, or Jesus as he came in the flesh, and leads them off from him. But the spirit that gives testimony for that Jesus, and leads to him, can be no other than the Spirit of God.

The devil has the most bitter and implacable enmity against that person, especially in his character of the Saviour of men. He mortally hates the doctrine of his Redemption; he never would go about to beget in men more honourable thoughts of him, and so to incline them more to fear him, and lay greater weight on his instructions and commands. The spirit that inclines men's hearts to the Seed of the Woman, is not the spirit of the serpent. He that heightens men's esteem of the glorious Michael, that Prince of the Angels, is not the spirit of the dragon that is at war with him.

30. II. When the spirit that is at work operates against the interest of Satan's kingdom, which lies in establishing sin, and cherishing men's worldly lusts; this is a sure sign that it is a true, and not a false spirit. This sign is given in the 4th and 5th verses. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." Here it is evident the Apostle is still comparing those that are influenced by the two opposite kind of spirits, the true and the false, and shewing the difference; the one are of God, and overcome the spirit of the world; the other are of the world, and speak and favour the things of the world. The spirit of the devil is here called, "He that is in the world." Christ says, "My kingdom

dom is not of this world." But it is otherwise with Satan's kingdom; he is the god of this world.

What the Apostle means by the world, or the things of the world, we learn by his own words, in the 2d chapter. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him: for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." So that by the world, the Apostle evidently means every thing that appertains to sin, all the corruptions and lusts of men, and all those acts and objects by which they are gratified. In these things lies the interest of his kingdom, who is "the spirit that is in the world."

So that we may safely determine, the spirit which works after such a manner, as to lessen men's esteem of the pleasures, profits and honours of the world, to take off their hearts from these things; and to engage them in a deep concern about eternal happiness; which puts them upon earnest seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and convinces them of the dreadfulfulness of sin; I say, the spirit that operates after such a manner, must needs be the Spirit of God.

It is not to be supposed that Satan would go about to convince men of sin, and awaken the conscience. It can no way serve his end, to make the candle of the Lord shine the brighter, and to open the mouth of that Vicegerent of God in the soul. Would the devil, when he is about to establish men in sin, awaken the conscience to see the dreadfulfulness of it, make them exceedingly sensible of their misery by reason of their past sins, and their great need of deliverance from the guilt of them, and more careful, inquisitive, and watchful, to discern what is sinful, and to avoid future sins; and so more afraid of the devil's temptations, and careful to guard against them? What do those men do with their reason, who suppose that the spirit that operates thus, is the spirit of the devil?

31. Possibly some may say, that the devil may awaken men's consciences to deceive them, and make them think they are of God, while they are indeed in the gall of bitterness. But to this it may be replied, that the man that has an awakened conscience is the least likely

to be deceived of any man in the world: it is the drowsy, insensible, stupid conscience, that is most easily blinded. The more sensible conscience is in a diseased soul, the less easily is it quieted without a real healing. The more sensible conscience is made of the dreadful-ness of sin, and of the greatness of man's own guilt, the less likely is he to rest in his own righteousness, or to be pacified with shadows. A man that has been thoroughly terrified with a sense of his danger and misery, is not easily flattered and made to believe himself safe, without good grounds.

To awaken conscience, and convince of the evil of sin, cannot then tend to establish sin, but certainly tends to make way for sin and Satan's being cast out. Therefore this is a good argument that the spirit that operates thus, cannot be the spirit of the devil; if Christ knew how to argue, who told the Pharisees, that supposed the spirit he wrought by, was the spirit of the devil, "that Satan would not cast out Satan," Matt. xii. 25, 26.

And therefore, if we see persons made sensible of the dreadful nature of sin, and of the displeasure of God against it, earnestly concerned for their eternal salvation, sensible of their need of God's help, and engaged to seek it in the use of the means that God has appointed, we may certainly conclude this is from the Spirit of God; whatever effects this concern has on their bodies; though it causes them to cry out aloud, or to shriek, or to faint, or though it throws them into convulsions, or whatever other way the blood and spirits are moved.

The influence of the Spirit of God is yet more abundantly manifest, if persons have their hearts drawn off from the world, and weaned from the objects of their worldly lusts, and taken off from worldly pursuits, by the sense they have of the excellency of divine things, and the affection they have to those spiritual enjoyments of another world, that are promised in the gospel.

32. III. That Spirit which operates in such a manner, as to "cause in men a greater regard to the Holy Scriptures, and establishes them more in their truth and divinity," is certainly the Spirit of God. This rule the Apostle gives us in the 6th verse: "We are of God;

God : he that knoweth God heareth us : he that is not of God, heareth not us : hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." "We are of God ;" that is, "We the Apostles, are sent forth of God, and appointed of him, to teach the world, and to deliver that doctrine, those instructions that are to be their rule ; therefore he that knoweth God, heareth us, &c." The Apostle's argument equally reaches all that, in the same sense, "are of God ;" that is, all those whom God appointed to deliver to his Church its rule of faith and practice ; all the Prophets and Apostles, whose doctrine God has made the foundation on which he has built his Church. The devil never would go about to beget in persons a regard to that divine Word, which God hath given to be the great and standing rule for the direction of his Church in all ages. A spirit of delusion will not incline persons to seek direction at the mouth of God. "To the law and to the testimony," is never the cry of those evil spirits that "have no light in them." It is God's own direction to discover their delusions, Isa. viii. 19, 20, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits:—To the law, and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The devil does not say the same as *Abraham* did, "They have *Moses* and the Prophets, let them hear them : " Nor the same that the voice from heaven did concerning Christ, "Hear ye him." Would the spirit of error, in order to deceive men, beget in them an high opinion of the infallible rule, and incline them to think much of it, and be very conversant with it ? Would the Prince of darkness, in order to promote his kingdom of darkness, lead men to the sun ? The devil has ever shewn a mortal hatred towards that holy book, the Bible : he has done all that has been in his power to extinguish that light, and to draw men off from it : he knows that it is that light by which his kingdom of darkness is to be overthrown. He has had for many ages experience of its power to defeat his purposes, and baffle his designs : It is his constant plague : It is the main weapon which *Michael* uses in his war with him : It is the sword of the spirit that pierces him, and conquers him : It is that great, and sore and strong sword, with which God
punishes

punishes Leviathan, that crooked serpent. It is that sharp sword that we read of, Rev. xix. 15, "that proceeds out of the mouth of him that sat on the horse," with which he smites his enemies. Every text is a dart to torment the old serpent: he has felt the stinging smart thousands of times; and consequently is enraged against the Bible, and hates every word in it: and therefore we may be sure that he never will go about to raise persons esteem of it, or affection to it. And accordingly we see it to be common in enthusiasts, to depreciate this written rule, and set up some other rule above it.

33. IV. Another rule to judge of spirits may be drawn from those opposite compellations given to the two opposite spirits, in the last words of the 6th verse, "The spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." These words exhibit the two opposite characters of the Spirit of God, and other spirits. And therefore, if we see that a spirit operates as a spirit of truth, leading persons to truth, convincing them of those things that are true, we may safely determine it to be a right and true spirit. As for instance, if we observe that the spirit which is at work, makes men more sensible than they used to be, that there is a God, and that he is a great God, and a just God; and makes them more to realize it, that they must die, that life is short, and very uncertain; that there is another world; that they have immortal souls, and that they must give account of themselves to God; if it convinces them that they are exceeding sinful by nature and practice; and that they are helpless in themselves; and confirms them in other things that are agreeable to sound doctrine: the spirit that works thus, operates as a Spirit of Truth: He represents things as they are indeed: He brings men to the Light; and we may conclude, that it is not the spirit of darkness that doth thus discover and manifest the Truth.

34. V. If the spirit that is at work among a people operates as a spirit of love to God and man, it is a sure sign that it is the Spirit of God. This sign the Apostle insists upon from the 6th verse to the end of the chapter: "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God: He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for

for God is love, &c." Here it is evident, that the Apostle is still comparing those two sorts of persons that are influenced by the opposite kinds of spirits; and mentions *love* as a mark by which we may know who has the true spirit: But this is especially evident by the 12th and 13th verses, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us: Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit." In these verses Love is spoken of as if it were that wherein the very nature of the holy Spirit consisted; or, as if divine Love dwelling in us, and the spirit of God dwelling in us, were the same thing; as it is also in the two last verses of the foregoing chapter, and in the 16th verse of this. Therefore this last mark he seems to speak of as the most eminent; and so insists much more largely upon it than upon all the rest; and speaks expressly of both love to God and men; of love to men, in the 7th, 11th, and 12th verses; and of love to God, in the 17th, 18th and 19th verses; and of both together, in the two last verses; and of love to men, as arising from love to God, in these two last verses.

Therefore, when the spirit that is at work amongst a people, works in them a delightful sense of the excellency of Jesus Christ; representing him as the chief among ten thousand, altogether lovely, and makes him precious to the soul; winning and drawing the heart with the wonderful, free love of God in giving his only begotten Son to die for us, and the wonderful dying love of Christ to us, who had no love to him, but were his enemies, as ver. 9, 10. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And ver. 16: "And we have known, and believed the love that God hath to us." And ver. 19, "We love him, because he first loved us:" When the spirit excites to love on these motives, and makes the soul to long after God and Christ, and to live so as to please and honour them; and also quells contentions among men, and gives a spirit of peace and good-will, excites to acts of outward kindness, and earnest desires of the salvation of other souls; and causes a delight in

those that appear as the children of God, and followers of Christ: When a spirit operates after this manner, there is the highest evidence of a true and divine spirit.

35. Indeed there is a counterfeit of love, that often appears amongst those that are led by a spirit of delusion. But sufficient is said in this passage of truly christian love, to distinguish it from all such counterfeits. It is love that arises from an apprehension of the wonderful riches of God's love to us, through Christ Jesus; attended with a sense of our own unworthiness, and a renunciation of all our own excellency and righteousness. See ver. 9, 10, 11, and 19. The surest character of true divine love, is, that it is an humble love, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. "Charity vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up." When therefore we see love in persons, attended with a sense of their own littleness, vileness, weakness, and utter insufficiency; and so with self-renunciation, and poverty of spirit, there are the manifest tokens of the Spirit of God: He that thus dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him.

Love and humility are two things the most contrary to the spirit of the devil, of any thing in the world; for the character of that evil spirit, above all things, consists in pride and malice.

36. Thus I have spoken particularly to the several marks the Apostle gives of a work of the true spirit. There are some of these things the devil would not do if he could: Thus, he would not awaken the conscience, and make men sensible of their miserable state by nature, by reason of sin, and of their great need of a Saviour. And he would not confirm men in a belief that Jesus is the Son of God, and the Saviour of sinners, or raise their value and esteem of him: He would not beget in men's minds an opinion of the necessity, usefulness, and truth of the holy scriptures, or incline them to hearken to them, or make much use of them; nor would he go about to shew men the truth, in things that concern their souls; to undeceive them, and lead them out of darkness into light, and give them a view of things as they are indeed. And there are other things that the devil neither can nor will do: He will not give men a spirit of divine love or christian humility; nor could he if he would: These things are as contrary as possible to his nature. And therefore, when
there

there is an extraordinary influence on the minds of a people, if these things are found in it, we are safe in determining that it is the work of God, whatever other circumstances it may be attended with, whatever instruments are employed, whatever methods are taken to promote it; whatever means a sovereign God, whose judgments are a great deep, makes use of to carry it on; and whatever motions there may be of the animal spirits, or whatever effects may be wrought on men's bodies. These marks, that the Apostle has given, are sufficient to stand alone, and support themselves; and wherever they are, they plainly shew the finger of God, and are sufficient to outweigh a thousand such objections, as many make from oddities, irregularities, and errors in conduct, and the delusions and scandals of some seeming believers.

37. But here some may object what the Apostle says, in the 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14. "Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

To which I answer, that this can be no objection against the sufficiency of these marks to distinguish the true spirit from the false spirit, in those false apostles and false prophets the Apostle speaks of, in whom the devil was transformed into an angel of light; because it is principally with a view to them that the Apostle gives these marks: as appears by the words of the text, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God." And this is the reason he gives, "Because many false prophets are gone out into the world:"—"There are many gone out into the world that are the ministers of the devil, that transform themselves into the prophets of God, in whom the spirit of the devil is transformed into an angel of light; therefore try the spirits by these rules that I shall give you, that you may be able to distinguish the true spirit from the false spirit, under such a crafty disguise." Those false prophets St. *John* speaks of, are doubtless the same sort of men with those false apostles, and deceitful workers, that St. *Paul* speaks of, in whom "the devil was transformed into an angel of light:" And therefore we may be sure that these marks the Apostle gives, are especially adapted to distinguish

between the true spirit, and the devil transformed into an angel of light, because they are given for that end. That is the Apostle's declared purpose, to give marks by which the true spirit may be distinguished from that sort of counterfeits.

38. Having thus done what I at first proposed, in considering what are the certain, distinguishing marks, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any work that falls under our observation, whether it be the work of the Spirit of God or no, I now proceed to the application.

I. From what has been said, I will venture to draw this inference, viz. "That that extraordinary influence
"that has lately appeared on the minds of the people
"abroad in this land, causing in them an uncommon
"concern about the things of religion, is undoubtedly,
"in the general, from the spirit of God." There are but two things that need to be known in order to such a work's being judged of, viz. Facts and Rules. The Rules of the word of God we have laid before us; and as to Facts, there are but two ways that we can come at them, so as to be in a capacity to compare them with the rules, either by our own observation, or by information from others that have had opportunity to observe.

As to this work that has lately been carried on in the land, there are so many things concerning it that are notorious, as, unless the Apostle *John* was out in his rules, are sufficient to determine it to be in general, the Work of God. It is notorious that the spirit that is at work, takes off person's minds from the vanities of the world, engages them in a deep concern about eternal happiness, puts them upon earnestly seeking their salvation, and convinces them of the dreadfulfulness of sin, and of their own guilty and miserable state by nature. It is notorious that it awakens men's consciences, and makes them sensible of the dreadfulfulness of God's anger, and causes in them a great desire and earnest care and endeavour to obtain his favour. It is notorious that it puts them upon a more diligent improvement of the means of grace which God has appointed. It is also notorious, that, in general, it works in persons a greater regard to the word of God, and desire of hearing and reading of it. And it is notoriously

riously manifest, that the spirit in general operates as a spirit of truth, making persons more sensible of what is really true, in those things that concern their eternal salvation: As that they must die, and that life is very short and uncertain; that there is a great and just God, whom they are accountable to, and that they stand in great need of a Saviour. It is furthermore notorious, that this spirit makes persons more sensible of the value of that Jesus that was crucified, and their need of him; and that it puts them upon earnestly seeking an interest in him. It cannot be but these things should be apparent to people in general through the land; for these things are not done in a corner. The work that has been wrought, has not been confined to a few towns, in some remote parts of the land, but has been carried on in many places, and in the principal and most populous, and public places in it. And it has now been continued for a considerable time; so that there has been a great deal of opportunity to observe the manner of the work.

39. And here I would observe, that the nature and tendency of a spirit that is at work, may be determined with much greater certainty, when it is observed in a great multitude of people of all sorts, and in various places, that when it is only seen in a few, in some particular place, that have been much conversant one with another. A few particular persons may agree to put a cheat upon others. But when the work is spread over great part of a country, in places distant one from another, among people of all sorts, and all ages, and in multitudes of persons of sound mind, good understanding, and known integrity; there would be the greatest absurdity in supposing that, by all the observation that can be made, for many months together, by those that are most intimate with them in these affairs, and have long been acquainted with them, still it cannot be determined what kind of influence the operation they are under, has upon people's minds; whether it tends to awaken their consciences, or to stupify them; to incline them more to seek their salvation, or neglect it; whether it confirms them in a belief of the scriptures, or leads them to Deism; and so in other things. There is probably no particular person here present, that thinks himself to have a right to be treated as one of

common sense, and veracity, but what would think himself abused, if he should declare to others, that "he had altered his mind in these and those particulars; he now found himself convinced of the truth of this or that, that formerly he did not believe;" if those he made such a profession to would not believe him, though they had long been conversant with him, and though he persisted in this profession for many months together, and nothing appeared in him but what agreed thereto. But much more unreasonable it would be, when such professions are made, not by a particular person only, but by great numbers of people, to suppose that they all agree in professing what indeed they do not feel in their souls.

40. Those in whom have been the uncommon appearances, whence have arisen the main objections to this work, have been of two sorts; either those that have been in great distress, in an apprehension of their sin and misery; or those that have been overcome with a sense of the greatness, wonderfulness, and excellency of divine things. Of the multitude of those of the former sort, that I have had opportunity to observe, there have been very few; but by all that could be observed, their distress has arisen from real proper conviction. And though I do not suppose, when such things were observed to be common, that persons have laid themselves under those violent restraints, to avoid outward manifestations of their distress, that perhaps they otherwise would have done; yet there have been very few in whom there has been any appearance of feigning or affecting such manifestations, and very many for whom it would have been undoubtedly impossible to avoid them. Generally those that have been in these agonies have appeared to be in the perfect exercise of their reason; and such of them as were able to speak, have been well able to give an account of the circumstances of their minds, and the cause of their distress, in the time of it, and well able to remember, and give an account afterwards. I have known a very few instances of those, that in their great extremity, have for a short space been deprived, in some measure, of the use of reason; but among the many hundreds, and it may be thousands, that have lately been brought to such agonies, I never yet knew one, lastingly deprived of

of their reason. In some that I have known, melancholy as evidently been mixt; and when it is so, the difference is very apparent; their distresses are of another kind, and operate quite after another manner. It is not truth only that distresses them, but many vain shadows and notions. Some in their great distress have not been able to give an account of themselves, or to explain the manner and cause of their trouble to others. But this will not be at all wondered at, by those who have had much to do with souls under spiritual difficulties. Some things that they are sensible of, are altogether new to them, their ideas and inward sensations are new, and what they therefore know not how to accommodate language to, or to find words to express. And some who at first say, they know not what was the matter with them, on being particularly examined, have been able to represent their case, though of themselves they could not find expressions so to do.

41. Some say the terrors they think such persons are in, that have such effects on their bodies, is only a fright. But certainly there ought to be a distinction made, between a very great fear, and extreme distress, arising from an apprehension of some dreadful truth, that is a cause fully proportionable to such an effect, and a needless, causeless fright; which is of two kinds; 1. either when persons are terrified with that which is not the truth; (of this I have seen very few instances, unless in case of melancholy;) or 2. when persons are under a childish fright, only from some terrible outward appearance, and a general notion thence arising, that there is something or other terrible, they know not what; without having in their minds the apprehension of any particular terrible truth whatsoever. Of such a kind of fright I have seen very little appearance, either among old or young.

Those that are in such extremity, commonly express a great sense of their exceeding wickedness, of their great guilt in the sight of God; and the dreadfulfulness of the punishment that sin exposes to. Very often they have a lively idea of the horrible pit of eternal misery; and at the same time the wrath of God appears amazingly terrible to them: God appearing to them so much provoked, they are apprehensive he will not bear with them any longer; but will now forthwith send them

them down to the dreadful pit they have in view. Very many, in the midst of their extremity, have been brought to an extraordinary sense of their fully deserving that wrath and destruction, which is then before their eyes; and at the same time that they feared every moment it would be executed upon them, they have been greatly convinced it would be altogether just that it should. And very often some texts of scripture, to that effect, has been set home upon their minds, whereby their minds have been calmed, and they have been brought, as it were, to lie at God's feet. And after great agonies, a little before light has arisen, they have been composed and quiet, in a kind of submission to a just God; but their bodily strength much spent; and sometimes their lives, to appearance, almost gone. Then light has appeared, and a glorious Redeemer, with his wonderful all-sufficient grace, has been represented to them, often, in some sweet invitation of scripture. Sometimes the light comes in suddenly, sometimes more gradually, filling their souls with love, admiration, joy, and self-abasement; drawing forth their hearts after the Redeemer, and desires to lie in the dust before him; and wishing that others might behold and embrace him; and longings to live to his glory; but appearing vile in their own eyes, and having much jealousy over their own hearts. And all the appearances of a real change of heart have followed; and grace has acted, from time to time, after the same manner it used to act in those that were converted formerly; except that in many, light and comfort have been in a higher degree. Many very young children have been thus wrought upon. There have been some instances very much like those demoniacs, Mark i. 26. and ix. 26. of whom we read, that "when the devil had cried with a loud voice, and rent them sore, he came out of them." And probably those instances were designed for a type of such things as these. Some have several turns of great agonies, before they are delivered; and some have been in such distresses, and it has passed off, and no deliverance at all has followed.

42. Some object against it, as great confusion, when there is a number together, in such circumstances; and say, "God cannot be the author of it, because he is 'the God of order, not of confusion,'" But let it be considered,

considered, what is the proper notion of confusion, but the breaking that order of things, whereby they are duly directed to their end, so that the order and the due connection of means being broken, they fail of their end: but conviction and conversion of sinners is the end of religious means. Not but I think persons should endeavour to refrain from such outward manifestations, in the time of the solemn worship. But if God is pleased to convince the consciences of persons, so that they cannot avoid great outward manifestations, even to the interrupting, and breaking off those public means they were attending, I do not think this is confusion, or an unhappy interruption; any more than if a company should meet in the field to pray for rain, and should be broken off from their exercise by a plentiful shower. Would to God that all the public assemblies in the land were broken off from their public exercises with such confusion as this the next sabbath-day! We need not be sorry for the breaking the order of the means, by obtaining the end to which that order is directed: He that is going a journey to fetch a treasure, need not be sorry that he is stopped, by meeting the treasure in the midst of his journey.

Besides those that are overcome with conviction and distress, I have seen many that have had their bodily strength taken away with a sense of the glorious excellency of the Redeemer, and the wonders of his dying love; with a very uncommon sense of their own littleness, and exceeding vileness attending it, with all expressions and appearances of the greatest abasement and abhorrence of themselves: And many have been even overcome with pity to the souls of others, and longing for their salvation.

43. As to the imprudences and irregularities that have been; it is not at all to be wondered at, that a reformation, after a long continued, and almost universal deadness, should at first be attended with such things. When God at first began his great work for the deliverance of his people, after their long continued bondage in *Egypt*, there were false wonders mixed with true, for a while; which hardened the unbelieving *Egyptians*, and made them to doubt of the divinity of the whole work. When day-light first appears after a night of darkness, we must expect to have darkness mixt with
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light, for a while, and not have perfect day, and the sun risen at once. The fruits of the earth are green before they are ripe, and come to their perfection gradually; and so Christ tells us is the kingdom of God, Mark iv. 26, 27, 28. "So is the kingdom of God; as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day; and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how: For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade; then the ear; then the full corn in the ear."

The imprudences and errors that have attended this work, are the less to be wondered at, if it be considered, that it is chiefly young persons that have been the subjects of it. And doubtless it has been one occasion of much of the misconduct there has been, that in many places, people who are the subjects of this work of God's spirit, see plainly that their ministers have an ill opinion of the work; and therefore, with just reason, dare not apply themselves to them as their guides in this work; and so are without guides: And no wonder that when a people are as sheep without a shepherd, they wander out of the way. A people, in such circumstances especially, stand in great and continual need of guides, and their guides stand in continual need of much more wisdom than they have of their own. And if a people have ministers that favour the work, and rejoice in it, yet it is not to be expected that either people or ministers should know so well how to conduct themselves in such an extraordinary state of things, while it is new, and what they never had any experience of before, as they may, after they have had experience and time, to see the tendency, consequences, and issue of things.

44. II. Let us all be hence warned, "By no means to oppose, or do any thing, in the least to hinder that work that has lately been carried on in the land."

The example of the *Jews* in Christ's and the Apostles' times, is enough to beget in those that do not acknowledge this work, a great jealousy of themselves, and to make them exceeding cautious of what they say or do. Christ then was in the world, and the world knew him not: He came to his own, by profession, and his own received him not. That coming of Christ had been much spoken of in scripture, and had been long expected;

expected; and yet because Christ came in a manner that they did not expect, they would not own him, but opposed him, counted him a madman, and the spirit that he wrought by the spirit of the devil. They stood and wondered at the great things that were done; but yet they met with so many stumbling-blocks, that they finally would not acknowledge him. And when the Spirit of God came to be so wonderfully poured out in the Apostles' days, they looked upon it to be confusion and distraction. They were astonished by what they saw and heard, but not convinced. And especially was the work of God then rejected, by those that were most conceited of their own understanding and knowledge, agreeable to Isaiah xxix. 14. "Therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." And many of them that had been in reputation for religion and piety, had a great spite against the work, because they saw it tended to diminish their honour, and to reproach their formality and lukewarmness. Yea, some maliciously and openly opposed and reproached the work of the Spirit of God, and called it the work of the devil.

There is another coming of Christ, a spiritual coming, to set up his kingdom in the world, that is as much spoken of in scripture prophecy, as that first coming of Christ was, that has been long expected by the church of God; and we have reason to think will be, in many respects, parallel with the other. And certainly, that low state that the visible Church of God has lately been sunk into, is very parallel with the state of the Jewish Church, when Christ came; and therefore no wonder at all, that when Christ comes, his work should appear a strange work to most. Whether the work that is now wrought, be the beginning of that great coming of Christ to set up his kingdom, that is so much spoken of, or no; yet it is evident from what has been said, that it is a work of the same spirit, and of the same nature. And there is no reason to doubt, but that for persons to continue long to refuse to acknowledge Christ in the work, especially those that are set to be teachers in his Church, will be in like manner provoking

voking to God, as it was in the *Jews* of old, to refuse to acknowledge Christ; and that, notwithstanding what they may plead of the great stumbling-blocks that are in the way, and the cause they have to doubt of the work.

45. Those that cannot believe the work to be true, because of the extraordinary degree and manner of it, should consider how it was with the unbelieving lord in *Samaria*, who said, "Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?" To whom *Elisha* said, "Behold thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." Let all to whom this work is a cloud and darkness, as the pillar of cloud and fire was to the Egyptians, take heed that it be not their destruction, as that was theirs, while it gave light to God's Israel.

I would pray those that quiet themselves with that, that they proceed on a principle of prudence, and are waiting to see what the issue of things will be, and what fruits men will bring forth in their lives and conversations, would consider, whether this will justify a long refraining from acknowledging Christ, when he appears so wonderfully in the land. It is probable that many of those that are thus waiting, know not what they are waiting for: If they wait to see a work of God without difficulties and stumbling-blocks, that will be like the fool waiting at the river side to have the water all run by. A work of God without stumbling-blocks is never to be expected; "It must needs be that offences come." There never yet was any great manifestation that God made of himself to the world, without many difficulties attending it. It is with the works of God, as it is with the word of God; they are full of those things that seem strange and inconsistent and difficult to the unbelieving hearts of men. Christ and his work always was, and always will be a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence; a gin and a snare to many. The prophet *Hosea*, in the last chapter of his prophecy, speaking of a glorious revival of religion in God's Church, when God "would be as the dew unto Israel, and he should grow as the lilly, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon," concludes all thus, "Who is wise? and he shall understand these things; prudent? and he shall know them. For the ways of the
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the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein."

It is probable that the stumbling-blocks that now attend this work, will in some respects be increased, and not diminished. Particularly, we probably shall see more instances of apostacy and gross iniquity among professors. And if one kind of stumbling-blocks are removed, it is to be expected that others will come. It is with Christ's works, as it was with his parables; things that are difficult to men's dark minds, are ordered of purpose, for the trial of persons dispositions and spiritual sense. Those that are now waiting to see the issue of this work, think they shall be better able to determine by and by; but they are probably, many of them mistaken. The Jews that saw Christ's miracles, waited to see better evidences of his being the Messiah; they wanted a sign from Heaven; but they waited in vain; their stumbling-blocks did not diminish, but increase; they found no end to them; and so were more and more hardened in their unbelief.

46. It is to be wondered at, that those who have doubted of the work that has been attended with such uncommon external appearances, should be easy in their doubts, without taking through pains to inform themselves, by going where such things have been to be seen, and narrowly observing them, and diligently enquiring into them; not contenting themselves only with observing two or three instances, nor resting till they were fully informed by their own observation. I do not doubt, but that if this course had been taken, it would have convinced all whose minds are not shut up against conviction. How greatly have they erred, who only from the uncertain reports of others, have ventured to speak slightly of these things? That caution of an unbelieving Jew might teach them more prudence, Acts v. 38, 39. "Refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel, or this work be of Men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it: lest haply ye be found to fight against God."

I come now in the

47. III. and last Place, to apply myself to those that are the friends of this work, who have been partakers of it, or are zealous to promote it. Let me ear-

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neſſly exhort ſuch “ to give diligent heed to themſelves, “ to avoid all errors and miſconduct, and whatſoever “ may darken and obſcure the work, and give occaſion “ to thoſe that ſtand ready to reproach it.” The Apoſtle was careful to cut off occaſion from thoſe that deſired occaſion. The ſame Apoſtle exhorts *Titus*, to maintain that ſtrict care and watch over himſelf, that both his preaching and behaviour might be ſuch as “ could not be condemned; that he who was of the contrary part might be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay of them,” Tit. ii. 7, 8. We had need to be “ wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.” It is of no ſmall conſequence that we ſhould behave ourſelves innocently and prudently. We muſt expect that the great enemy of this work will try his utmoſt with us; and he will eſpecially triumph if he can prevail againſt any of us: He knows it will do more to further his intereſt, than if he prevailed againſt an hundred others. We had need to watch and pray, for we are but little children; this roaring lion is too ſtrong for us, and this old ſerpent too ſubtle for us.

Humility, ſelf-diffidence, and an entire dependance on our Lord, will be our beſt defence. Let us therefore maintain the ſtricteſt watch againſt ſpiritual pride, or a being lifted up with extraordinary experiences and comforts. We had need, after ſuch favours, in a ſpecial manner to keep a ſtrict and jealous eye upon our own hearts, leſt there ſhould ariſe high thoughts of ourſelves, as being now peculiar favourites of heaven. When we have great discoveries of God made to our ſouls, we ſhould not ſhine bright in our own eyes. *Mofes*, when he had been converſing with God in the mount, tho’ his face ſhone ſo as to dazzle the eyes of *Aaron* and the people, yet he did not ſhine in his own eyes; he wiſt not that his face ſhone. Let none think themſelves out of danger of this ſpiritual pride. God ſaw that the Apoſtle Paul himſelf was not out of danger of it, no not when he had juſt been converſing with God in the third heaven: See 2 Cor. xii. 7. Pride is the firſt ſin that ever entered into the Univerſe, and it lies loweſt of all in the foundation of the whole building of ſin, and is the moſt ſecret, deceitful, and unſearchable in its way of working, of any luſt whatſoever. It is ready to mix with every thing; and no-
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thing is so hateful to God, and contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel; and there is no one sin that does so much let in the devil into the hearts of men, and expose them to his delusions. I have seen it in many instances. The devil has come in at this door, presently after some extraordinary communion with God, and has wofully deluded and led them astray, till God has mercifully opened their eyes: And they themselves have afterwards been sensible, that it was pride that betrayed them.

48. Some of the true friends of the work of God's Spirit have erred in giving too much heed to impulses and strong impressions of their minds. These impressions, if they are truly from the Spirit of God, are of a quite different nature from the gracious influences of the Spirit of God on the heart. They are of the nature of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which the Apostle distinguishes from the grace of the Spirit, 1 Cor. xiii.

But his ordinary gracious influences are by far the most excellent and glorious, as the Apostle largely shews in the first of Corinthians, beginning with the 31st Verse of the 12th Chapter, where speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, he says, But covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet I shew you a more excellent way, i. e. a more excellent way of the Influence of the Spirit: And then he goes on in the next Chapter, to shew what more excellent way is, even that which is in the grace of the Spirit, which summarily consists in charity, or divine love. A man may have those extraordinary gifts, and yet be abominable to God, and go to hell: The spiritual and eternal life of the soul does not consist in the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit: This, and not those, is that influence of the Spirit of God, which God bestows only on his dear children: He has sometimes thrown out the other to dogs and swine, as he did to *Balaam*, *Saul*, and *Judas*. Many wicked men at the day of Judgment will plead, "Have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works." The greatest privilege of the prophets and apostles, was not their working miracles, but their eminent holiness. The grace that was in their hearts, was a thousand times more their dignity

honour, than their miraculous gifts. To have grace in the heart is an higher privilege than the blessed virgin herself had, in having the body of the second person in the Trinity conceived in her womb, by the power of the highest overshadowing her, Luke xi. 27, 28. "And it came to pass as he spake these things, a certain woman of the company lift up her voice, and said unto him; blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked; But he said, yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

49. The ordinary sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God are the end of all extraordinary gifts, as the Apostle shews, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. They are good for nothing, any further than as they are subordinate to this end; they will be so far from profiting any without it, that they will only aggravate their misery. This is, as the Apostle observes, the most excellent way of God's communicating his Spirit to his Church; it is the greatest glory of the Church in all ages. This glory is what makes the state of the Church on earth most like the state of the church in heaven, where prophecy and tongues, and other miraculous gifts cease, and are vanished away, and God communicates his Spirit only in that more excellent way that the Apostle speaks of, viz. *Charity*, or divine *Love*, which never faileth. Therefore the glory of the approaching happy state of the Church does not at all require these extraordinary gifts. As that state of the church will be the nearest of any to its perfect state in heaven, so perhaps it will be like it in this, that all extraordinary gifts shall have ceased and vanished away; and all those stars and moon, with the reflected light they gave in the night, or a more dark season, shall be swallowed up in the sun of divine love. The Apostle speaks of those gifts of inspiration as childish things, in comparison of the influence of the spirit in divine love, things given to the church only to support it in its minority, till the church should have a complete standing rule established, and all the ordinary means of grace should be settled; but as things that should cease, as the church advanced above its childish state, and should entirely vanish, when the church should come to the state of manhood; 1 Cor. xiii. 11. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but

but when I became a man, I put away childish things."

For my part, I had rather enjoy the sweet influences of the Spirit, shewing Christ's infinite grace, and dying love, drawing from the holy exercises of faith, and humble joy in God, one quarter of an hour, than to have propheticall visions and revelations for a whole year. It appears to me much more probable that God should give such revelations to his saints in the dark times of popery, than now in the approach of the most glorious and perfect state of his church on earth. It does not appear, that there is any need of those extraordinary gifts, to introduce this happy state, and set up the kingdom of God through the world; I have seen so much of the power of God in a more excellent way, as to convince me that God can easily do it without.

I would therefore intreat the people of God to be very cautious how they give heed to such things. I have seen them fail in very many instances; and know by experience that impressions being made with great power, and presently after, yea in the midst of sweet communion with God, and attended with texts of scripture strongly impressed on the mind, are no sure signs of their being Revelations from heaven; for I have known such impressions fail, and prove vain by the event, in some instances attended with all these circumstances.

50. Neither let us despise human learning. They that say human learning is of little or no use in the work of the ministry do not consider what they say; if they did, they would not say it. By human learning I mean, and suppose others mean, the improvement of the common knowledge which men have, by human and outward means. And therefore to say that human learning is of no use, is as much as to say that the education of a child, or that the common knowledge that a grown man has, more than a little child, is of no use; and so that a child of four years old, is as fit for a teacher in the church of God, with the same degree of grace, and capable of doing as much to advance the kingdom of Christ, by his instruction, as any understanding knowing man of thirty years of age. If adult persons have greater ability and advantage to do service, because they have more human knowledge than a little child,

child, then doubtless if they have more human knowledge still, with the same degree of grace, they would have still greater ability and advantage to do service. An increase of knowledge, without doubt, increases a man's advantage either to do good or hurt, according as he is disposed. It is too manifest to be denied, that God made great use of human learning in the Apostle Paul, as he also did in Moses and Solomon.

And if knowledge, obtained by human means, is not to be despised, then it will follow that the means of obtaining it are not to be neglected, viz. Study; and that this is of great use in order to a preparation for a publick instructing others. And tho' undoubtedly, an having the heart full of the powerful influences of the spirit of God, may at some Times enable persons to speak profitably, yea very excellently, without study; yet this will not warrant us needlessly to cast ourselves down from the pinnacle of the temple, depending upon it that the angel of the Lord will bear us up, and keep us from dashing our foot against a stone, when there is another way to go down, tho' it be not so quick. And I would pray that that method, which tends greatly to help both the understanding and memory, may not be wholly neglected.

I beg of those that have a true zeal for promoting this work of God, that God has begun in the land, well to consider these things. I am persuaded that as many of them as have much to do with souls, if they do not hearken to me now, yet will be of the same mind when they have had more experience.

51. One other thing that I would intreat the friends of this work of God to avoid, is managing the controversy with opposers with too much heat, and appearance of an angry zeal; and particularly insisting very much on the persecution of opposers. If their persecution were ten times so great as it is, methinks it would not be best to say so much about it. It becomes christians to be like lambs, not to be apt to complain and cry when they are hurt; to be dumb and not open their mouth, after the example of our dear Redeemer; and not to be like swine, that are apt to scream aloud when they are touched. We should not be ready presently to think and speak of fire from heaven, when the Samaritans oppose us, and will not receive us into their villages.

villages. God's zealous ministers would do well to think of the direction the Apostle *Paul* gave to a zealous minister, 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth. And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

F I N I S.

OF A WORD OF THE GOSPEL

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